



**U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement**

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News Release

Five indicted for roles in international drug conspiracy
Shipped 7,500 pounds of marijuana concealed inside furniture from Mexico

CHICAGO — Five individuals have been indicted for allegedly possessing and intending to distribute 7,500 pounds of marijuana concealed inside furniture from Mexico to Chicago. These indictments resulted from an investigation conducted by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with assistance from: the Union Pacific Railroad Police Department, the Drug Enforcement Administration and the Illinois State Police.

The defendants were charged in a 12-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury May 9 with conspiracy, possession with intent to distribute marijuana, and using a cell phone to commit a felony.

Those charged in the indictment are: Griselda Rodriguez, 22, of Chicago; Agustin Rodriguez-Macias, 29, of Chicago; Cresencio Chavez, 50, of South Holland; Maria Barajas, 44, of Chicago; and Juan Carlos Magana-Cisneros, 25, of Chicago.

The marijuana-laden furniture was allegedly imported via rail from Mexico and intercepted by U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers in Eagle Pass, Texas, in November 2005. ICE agents initiated an investigation and determined that the furniture was destined for MGB Furniture in Chicago. ICE agents initiated a “controlled delivery” from Texas to Chicago. On Nov. 30, multiple individuals, allegedly including Rodriguez, Rodriguez-Macias and Chavez, took delivery of the furniture and placed it inside several public storage units in Chicago. ICE agents set up 24-hour surveillance of the storage facility.

ICE agents executed a search warrant at the storage facility Feb. 3 and seized the furniture. Concealed inside were 33,533 packages of marijuana weighing about 7,500 pounds. Four days later, ICE agents arrested Rodriguez, Rodriguez-Macias, Chavez, Barajas and Magana-Cisneros and seized two handguns.

“This was an excellent example of teamwork among federal and local agencies,” said Special Agent-in-Charge Elissa A. Brown, special agent-in-charge of the ICE Office of Investigations in Chicago. “We work aggressively to ensure that drugs do not make it into our communities and to dismantle the criminal networks that profit from narcotics trafficking.”

Assistant U.S. Attorney Michelle Weiss is prosecuting the case for the government.

The public is reminded that an indictment contains only charges and is not evidence of guilt. The defendants are presumed innocent and are entitled to a fair trial at which the government has the burden of proving guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.